

Low-Cost Spirometer

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Motivation.....	3
Problem Statement.....	4
Background Information – Climate Considerations.....	5
Design Requirements.....	6
Current Devices.....	7
Design Alternatives.....	9
Pressure Sensor.....	9
Volume Based Sensor.....	10
Anemometer.....	11
Aspects Common to All Designs.....	12
Design matrix.....	12
Category definitions and weightings.....	12
Final Design.....	17
Spirometer.....	17
Ergonomic Considerations.....	19
Audio/Visual Progress.....	19
Testing.....	21
Apparatus.....	21
Procedure.....	22
Initial prototype testing.....	23
Final prototype testing.....	24
Timeline of Future Work.....	27
Summer 2009.....	29
I. Spirometer design.....	29
II. Software Design.....	31
Capstone courses.....	31
Conclusion/Benefits.....	33
References.....	34
APPENDIX A - Product Design Specifications.....	35
<i>Background and Problem Statement</i>	35
Client requirements.....	35
<i>Design requirements</i>	35

Abstract

Current spirometers on the market often have retail prices of over \$1,000. As a result of this high cost, many physicians practicing in developing countries lack the resources to purchase spirometry equipment. The development of a low-cost, reliable spirometer would allow these physicians to make more quantitative assessments of their patients' pulmonary health. A standardized coaching program that would instruct and motivate patients through spirometric maneuvers would also prove beneficial to the reproducibility of results. Through testing and redesign of an earlier prototype, we have developed a prototype that is capable of measuring volume from a 3 liter syringe within 3% error. It also yields precise, reproducible results when tested against constant air flows. In the future, the accuracy will be improved and audiovisual coaching will be integrated with the spirometer with open source software that we will develop.

Motivation

A spirometer is a tool that can be used to measure respiratory volume and flow rate. A typical spirogram plots the expiratory air flow against the total expiratory volume. Figure 1 shows an example test spirogram, contrasted against the values expected for the test, shown by a dotted line. This information is commonly used to diagnose chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. According to the American Association for Respiratory Care, COPD is currently the fourth greatest cause of death worldwide, and over 600 million people have been diagnosed with the disease [1]. Unfortunately, many of those diagnosed reside in developing countries in which health care providers are unable to purchase spirometric equipment due to high costs. Current spirometers on the market frequently cost over \$1000. As a result, millions of

people with COPD are unable to be effectively monitored and treated for their disease.

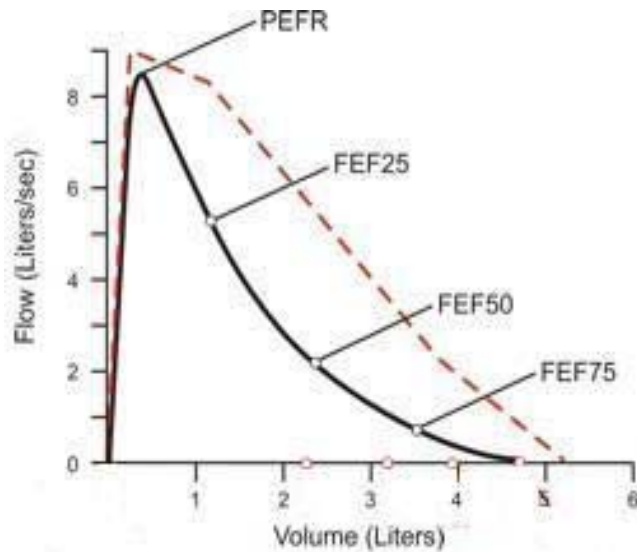


Figure 1: An example of a spirogram showing air flow rate as a function of the volume of air a person expires. PEFr is peak expiratory flow rate and FEFx is forced expiratory flow rate at x% of the forced vital capacity maneuver. The dotted line shows the expected performance, solid line shows actual test result.

Another factor influencing the efficiency of COPD treatment is the high potential for variability between tests. Traditionally, a patient performs the spirometry maneuvers while being monitored and instructed by a trained technician. Unfortunately, the quality of coaching provided by different technicians can lead to significantly different results. These variances have the potential to be even more significant if the patient is monitored at various facilities. Spirometers are also useful for evaluating asthma patients, and the problem of coaching variance is also relevant for asthma monitoring.

Problem Statement

In attempt to increase global access to spirometric equipment, Dr. David Van Sickle of the University of Wisconsin's department of Population Health Sciences is seeking the design of a low-cost, reliable spirometer. The project includes the physical design of the spirometer, software development, and designing a universal interface. The spirometer should be capable of measuring lung flows and volumes and should be usable by patients without the aid of a trained technician. The device should also be able to connect to a computer via USB to display and store

the data. As the procedures are performed, a combination of client and server software will graphically display flow and volume data, monitor and evaluate the quality of the maneuver, and instruct the subject when their performance needs to be corrected. The software should also carry out some rudimentary analysis and interpretation using algorithms that are freely available from the American Thoracic Society. The entire product should be widely affordable to physicians in developing countries and increase the reproducibility of pulmonary function measurements by delivering the standardized instruction and coaching across test sites.

Background Information – Climate Considerations

Temperature and humidity are factors that can greatly affect the function of electronic devices. The climates of emerging countries vary greatly not only between different countries, but within a specific country as well. Therefore, we need to design the spirometer to be able to function in the many possible weather conditions that it may face. We investigated the climates of the countries that our spirometer is planned to be initially tested in, such as India.

India experiences extreme temperature conditions, and the weather patterns differ greatly in different regions. During the monsoon season, average relative humidity is measured over 90%. The desert region experiences extremely hot temperatures averaging around 45°C. Paraguay has extreme temperatures in the mid 40°C range and humidity up to about 85%. Mexico experiences climate conditions similar to that of Paraguay. [3]

Electronic circuits are prone to failure in high temperatures and damp conditions. Sensor components are especially sensitive to these conditions. To limit the effect that the climate conditions will have on the accuracy of our circuit, we selected a pressure sensor that is pre-calibrated to be accurate in temperatures ranging from 0 to 85°C. We do need to design the

handle to seal off the electronic circuit from the outside environment as much as possible to eliminate the possibility of condensation forming on the inside and damaging the circuit.

Design Requirements

Our design constraints need to meet not only our client's needs but also the standards set by the American Thoracic Society for all spirometers listed in *ATS/ERS Standardisation of Spirometry*, 2005 [4]. To meet these standards, our device must be able to measure and record air flows of at least 14 liters per second and volumes up to 8 liters. It must also be able to produce accurate results in the various climates that exist in emerging nations. As noted above, these nations possess extreme temperature and humidity ranges that our device must be able to perform in. Because the device may be transported to other clinics over rugged terrain via primitive methods, the spirometer must be durable and portable. The device should need only an initial calibration at the time of manufacture to minimize setup time and training required in the field. To reduce the possibility of spreading communicable diseases, the spirometer must be easily and quickly disinfected. The spirometer needs to have a universal interface with any computer via USB connection to display and analyze the results of the pulmonary function tests. Besides analyzing the data, the software on the computer must deliver standardized coaching and instruction to the user during the maneuvers. This standardized coaching will eliminate the need of a specially trained technician to administer the tests in the field. This standardization will also provide consistency in the coaching at multiple sites and increase the reliability of the tests across these sites. Finally, the spirometer must cost less than \$50 so that emerging nation clinicians can afford it.

Current Devices

There are many spirometers currently on the market, most of which cost over a thousand dollars. This amount of money is too large for an emerging country clinic to invest in, even if the investment will eventually be paid back.

Some companies that manufacture spirometers include SDI Diagnostic, MicroDirect, and Welch Allyn. SDI Diagnostic manufactures six different spirometers ranging from \$995 to \$2395 [5,6]. The Spirolab II is a top of the line spirometer that costs \$2395 and the Astra 300 is a middle of the line spirometer that costs \$1429 (Figure 2). SDI Diagnostic advertises high-tech features like a touch screen, Bluetooth, and a bidirectional turbine with a rotary sensor, and a sturdy carrying case. All of these features drive up the cost of their spirometers.



Figure 2: The SDI Diagnostics Spirolab II (left) and SDI Diagnostics Astra 300 TouchScreen Spirometer (right). [9]

MicroDirect

spirometers are somewhat more affordable than SDI Diagnostic spirometers with the SpiroUSB costing \$1419.55 and the spiro√Compact portable spirometer costing \$195 [5,8] (Figure 3).

However, the compact spirometer only measures FEV₁, so it is not useful in most medical diagnoses. These spirometers are also above the range of \$50.



Figure 3: The Microdirect SpiroUSB (left) and spiro^v (right) spirometers. [7,8]

The Welch Allyn SpiroPerfect spirometer (Figure 4) features single use mouthpieces, incentive graphics, and automatic interpretation and analysis. This spirometer seems perfect, except for its cost of \$2000 with a calibration syringe and \$1660 without one [5,9].



Figure 4: The Welch Allyn SpiroPerfectTM with calibration syringe. [9]

Overall, all spirometers on the market are far too expensive for use in emerging nations where a high cost of investment is a huge deterrent from buying them. Cheaper spirometers are

simply not accurate or versatile enough to be used in clinical settings, and with high incidences of COPD in the developing world, the lack of a reliable, affordable spirometer is unacceptable.

Design Alternatives

Pressure Sensor

Our first design uses a differential pressure sensor measuring the pressure drop across the flow tube of the device. From the measured pressure, we can calculate the velocity of the air moving through the mouthpiece using the equation $v = k \sqrt{P}$, where v the air velocity, k is some constant, and P is the measured pressure. The constant will be determined by

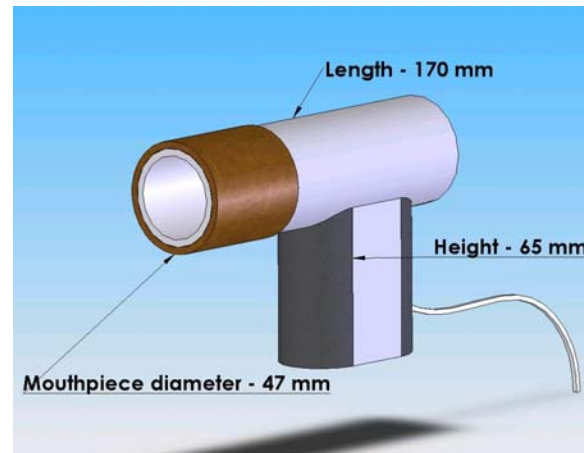


Figure 5 – Pressure Sensor model

passing air of a known velocity through the mouthpiece and reading the pressure sensor output. Once the velocity is known, we can calculate the flow rate of the air, which can be integrated to yield the volume of air exhaled.

Physically, this design features a T-shaped handle that houses the circuitry for the device. The shape of the handle helps encourage the user to maintain an upright posture, which is needed to obtain the best results in a pulmonary function test. Because all the hardware is enclosed inside the handle of the spirometer, this design is very small and portable. The small size and limited number of parts needed also greatly reduces the price. The most expensive part of the design is the pressure sensor itself, which costs between \$6.26 and \$8.99 [10]. This sensor has the added advantage that it comes pre-calibrated from the factory. According to manufacturer specifications, the sensor will accurately measure pressure differences over temperatures ranging from 0 to 85°C. The mouthpiece of this design is disposable and made from cardboard. The

limited durability of cardboard is beneficial to the design as it will decrease the opportunity for it to be improperly reused between patients. The major disadvantage of this design is the operating cost due to using disposable mouthpieces (~7.5 ¢ per mouthpiece) [11] and maintaining the supply chain in remote areas.

Volume Based Sensor

The second design alternative uses a volume-based sensor. A patient performs the test by exhaling into the elongated tube extending from the device as shown in Figure 6. This tube leads to a bellows-shaped chamber that expands with the volume of exhaled air. The chamber connects to a potentiometer which changes resistance as the bellows expands. This causes the potentiometer to produce an output voltage directly correlated to expiratory volume. The mouthpiece of this design would be held much like a microphone during use and would be a permanent plastic piece that would require disinfecting in between users.



Figure 6 – Volume Sensor example [12]

One advantage to this design is that it would have a low operating cost due to the permanent mouthpiece, which would not need to be replaced after each use. The permanent mouthpiece also eliminates the need for a reliable supply of mouthpieces to use the device. This design would also be relatively simple to construct, and repairs would be very basic. However, this device would be quite large in comparison to the other designs. The chamber would have to expand to a volume of at least eight liters according to our design constraints, and the elongated tube would also add to the bulk of the device. Reliability is also an issue with this

design as the tube contains a significant amount of dead space. This dead space not only weakens the signal, but could also increase the need for calibration.

Anemometer

The third design alternative utilizes an anemometer to detect air flow. The patient would hold the device like a microphone and exhale through the tube shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8. A fan located within the tube, shown in Figure 8, would spin at a rate proportional to the velocity of exhaled air that passes through it. The fan's rotation will

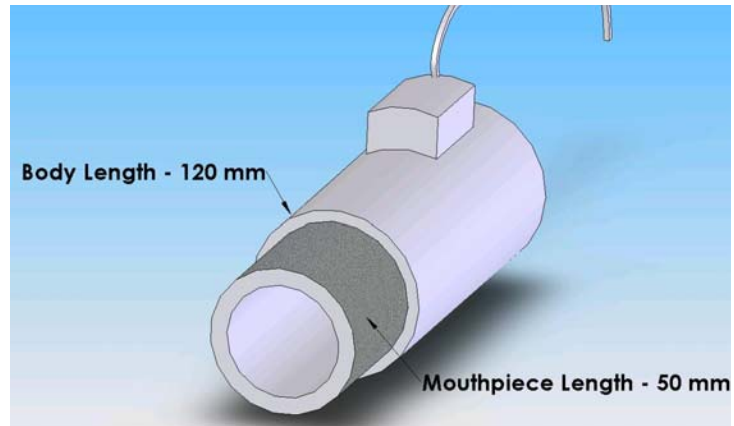


Figure 7: Design of Anemometer Device

cause optical interference of a laser. A pulse counter would detect the rate of interference and generate a signal that can be correlated to air flow. A permanent mouth piece with a disposable rubber coating will be used to maintain sanitation.

This design is very compact and hand-held, allowing it to be quite portable. It also produces a direct measurement of flow instead of calculating it from pressure or volume. However, this design would not be very durable. The small moving parts of the fan could be easily broken and would require more regular maintenance to ensure proper rotation. This frequent maintenance would lead to a high cost operating cost and a lower reliability. Additionally, it is not certain whether the output of the device would be accurate at the end of the maneuver. After the patient has stopped exhaling, momentum could cause the fan to continue rotating despite no air being forced through the tube, producing an inaccurate signal.

Aspects Common to All Designs

Some aspects of the final design will be the same regardless of which spirometer design is ultimately built. Each design outputs an analog voltage which needs to be converted to a digital signal for a computer to analyze. Additionally, regardless of how the spirometer is designed and works, the results of the tests must be processed and evaluated to achieve the necessary flow vs. volume graph. Finally, the standardized coaching procedure will be implemented through audio/visual software installed on the computer the spirometer is connected to.

Design matrix

Category definitions and weightings

In order to assess our three designs, we set up a design matrix (Figure 9) that allowed us to measure how well each of our designs met various criteria. The most important feature of our spirometer design that will set it apart from all other spirometers currently on the market is its cost, and as such it was weighted very highly in our matrix. Cost was divided into manufacturing and operational subcategories which when combined composed 30% of our matrix. **Manufacturing cost** refers to the cost of mass-producing our design and encompasses material and labor expenses. The **operating cost** refers to costs associated with maintenance and upkeep.

The other highly weighted category is the **functionality** of the spirometer. The spirometer needs to be both accurate and precise, meeting the standards of the American Thoracic Society.

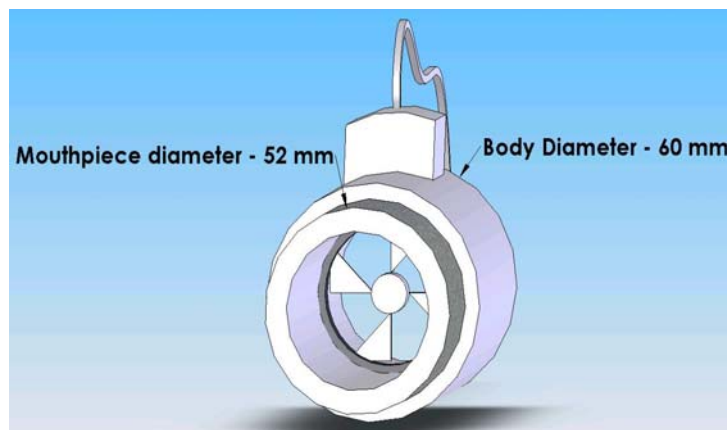


Figure 8: Fan located within tube for anemometer design.

Reliability falls under the **calibration** category. The spirometer will be properly calibrated before its initial use, and we expect the calibration to be valid for the lifetime of the spirometer. Thus, the reliability of the spirometer is a measure of the stability of the calibration. Together, functionality and calibration make up 30% of our matrix because medical centers in developing countries need to take accurate measurements from patients for years. If the spirometer we design is only accurate for a few months, it is not worth the cost of investment. Furthermore, because repair is inconvenient at best and likely expensive or impossible, these categories are as important as cost.

The **safety** category primarily deals with whether the spirometer has good safeguards against transmission of communicable diseases. A safe spirometer will have quick, intuitive procedures that allow each user a test with very minimal risk of contracting a disease from the previous user. Design **ergonomics** entails the spirometer being comfortable and easy to use with no detriment to productivity and performance. We will also add to this category the capability of the design to encourage proper posture, allowing for maximal lung performance and test accuracy. **Durability** refers to the ability for the spirometer to still be functional many years in the future with normal usage plus occasional mishandling or misuse. Finally, **portability** means that the spirometer should be easy to move between sites and that it should be easily stored in a small space. Each of these last four categories was only weighted 10% of our matrix because they are not unique features to our spirometer – spirometers on the market have all of these features. Also, these features, while relevant, are not as important to our client's requirements as cost and functionality.

	Weight	Pressure	Volume	Anemometer
Manufacturing cost	15	10	7	6
Operating cost	15	7	12	8
Functionality	20	15	8	10
Calibration	10	9	7	9
Safety	10	8	6	8
Ergonomics	10	8	6	6
Durability	10	7	5	3
Portability	10	7	2	9
Total	100	71	53	59

Figure 9: Design matrix that allowed assessment of the three design options.

Our three designs fared differently in each of the categories. In the category of manufacturing cost, we had to take into account the cost of the sensor and the cost of the materials necessary to build the body of the spirometer. The largest cost component of the pressure sensor design is the sensor itself whose cost ranges from \$6.27-\$8.99 per unit depending on quantity. The anemometer design sensor would cost substantially more because a high-quality laser is necessary, and these are expensive instruments. The “sensor” in the volume-based design would be extremely cheap because potentiometers only cost a few cents. This design, however, must be large because it is required to measure 8 liters of air, so material costs would run high. The pressure and anemometer designs have much smaller bodies, so materials would cost a fraction of what the volume-based spirometer’s materials would. Because of a moderately priced sensor and a small body, the pressure design received the highest score in the manufacturing cost category.

The primary factors affecting operating cost are disposable mouthpieces and disinfectant. We do not know at the time of writing what disinfectant is required or what quantity, but we will

assume that the cost of using disinfectant is less than using disposable cardboard mouthpieces or disposable rubber sleeves. The pressure design uses cardboard mouthpieces, which will cost approximately \$0.07 per mouthpiece. The volume design will use a permanent mouthpiece and will need to be disinfected after every use. The anemometer design will use disposable rubber sleeves, which will cost slightly less than each disposable cardboard mouthpiece. However, the expected high repair cost associated with the moving parts in the anemometer affects the rating for the operating cost, resulting in a poor score. The volume design scored the highest in this category because it does not use disposable mouthpieces and it is not prone to breaking.

The pressure and anemometer designs scored higher than the volume design in functionality because they are smaller and have less dead space to affect readings. Dead space has the potential to significantly affect readings, causing the significantly lower score for the volume sensor. Additionally, the fan in the anemometer design may continue to spin even after the user finishes the trial, affecting the accuracy of the end of the measurement. The pressure and anemometer designs also scored higher than the volume design in calibration because the pressure sensor comes pre-calibrated while the volume would have to be calibrated with a standardized syringe every time the spirometer is used to maintain accuracy. The anemometer will not have to be calibrated every session, although we expect the moving parts will make it necessary to be recalibrated occasionally.

All devices are physically safe – they do not contain any sharp ends or any components that could physically injure the user. The major safety risk associated with our device is the spread of communicable diseases, and it was determined via client and emerging nation physician input that one-use disposable mouthpieces were safer than permanent mouthpieces. This is because some sites in emerging nations may not have an appropriate disinfectant readily

available. While there is some risk of procedures not being followed properly and a disposable mouthpiece being used more than once, the spirometer will be designed primarily for use in a clinical setting where there are trained personnel who follow protocol.

It was determined that a T-shaped spirometer would encourage the user to hold him/herself more upright when using the spirometer, which gives a more accurate and repeatable result. Users may be tempted to hunch over when breathing into a microphone-shaped mouthpiece, resulting in sub-maximal performance. Repeatability is directly related to user comfort because a bad reading must be thrown out and the user must repeat the exercise until three acceptable readings are obtained. Blowing forcefully into a spirometer is strenuous, and it benefits the user to perform minimal number of exhalations to receive acceptable results. The T-shaped spirometer would best facilitate this. The pressure design was the only one that had a T-shaped design, so it fared best in this category.

The pressure design was determined to be the most durable because it contains no moving parts and is thus least likely to break. The volume design could potentially be ruptured, giving it a lower durability score, and the anemometer depends completely on moving parts and a laser that is properly aligned. If either of these anemometer components breaks, the spirometer would be nonfunctional.

The anemometer design was the most portable because it is a microphone-shaped six inch tube. The pressure design is the same length and diameter, but it is T-shaped and thus slightly less portable. The volume design is required to physically store up to 8 L of air, and is thus enormous in comparison, resulting in the lowest score in the portability category.

Final Design

Spirometer

We chose polyvinylchloride (PVC) to make the prototype because of its low cost and ease of manufacturing. Additionally, PVC is durable and easy to disinfect. The first prototype design was constructed from a section of 6" long PVC pipe with a 1" diameter inside a PVC T-joint. Inside the large tube, a section ½" long of ¾" diameter pipe was placed to create a constriction. A constriction causes an increase in air velocity and therefore a greater pressure drop across the differential pressure sensor. It was determined that the constriction was necessary to produce an output voltage that would be useful as our initial calculations showed an open tube was insufficient.

However, after initial testing, we found the first prototype did not provide enough of a pressure drop to produce a usable output voltage. A new prototype was fabricated out of a nylon rod (Figure 10). Nylon was an acceptable replacement for the PVC tube because it is also inexpensive and easy to manufacture while not sacrificing durability or ease of disinfecting.

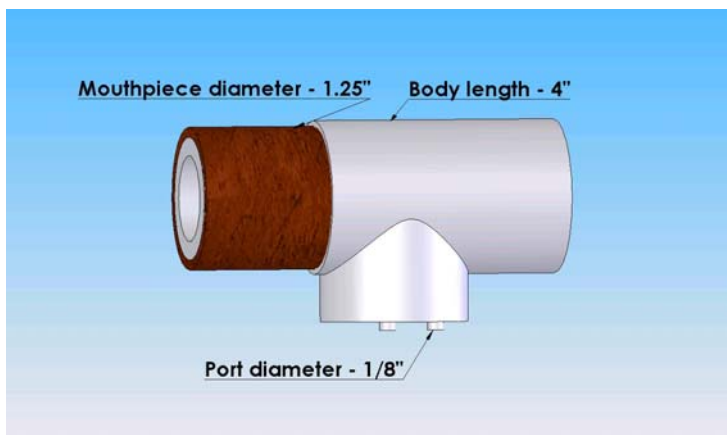


Figure 10: Solidworks model of the second prototype showing important dimensions.

From this solid rod, we drilled a ⅞" hole on one side and a ½" hole from the other, thus creating a larger constriction. The overall length of the second prototype was four inches. We used a similar PVC T-joint to function as a handle during testing. The constriction in the second prototype was significant enough to give

a signal from the pressure sensor that was easily distinguishable from the environmental noise.

However, due to the decreased inner diameter of the constriction, the resistance of the spirometer

exceeds the maximum set forth by the American Thoracic Society. The requirement is less than 150 Pa/L·s, while our model was calculated at over 500 Pa/L·s. To overcome this, we plan on remaking the spirometer tube with larger overall diameters but with the same $\frac{3}{8}$ " drop from the large to small diameter.

The final prototype also utilizes a disposable cardboard mouthpiece to protect the user from communicable diseases. The cardboard tube came from a toy model rocket body. When the spirometer goes into production, the cardboard tubing will be ordered from a supplier that will pre-cut the tubes to length. Mouthpieces for the final product will cost around \$0.07 per piece.

The differential pressure used is Freescale Semiconductor's MPX2010DP. This model was chosen because it comes pre-calibrated from the factory for temperatures between 0 and 85°C. Additionally, the sensor has been tested to be durable against the medium of human breath. [13] The sensor was connected to the spirometer tube using $\frac{1}{8}$ " vinyl tubing and $\frac{1}{8}$ " ports super glued into the spirometer tube. The MPX2010DP is a bridge-type sensor with two output

voltages. These voltages from the sensor were fed to a development board with the ZMD 31014 (iLite) signal conditioning chip. The conditioning chip allows us to amplify the signal coming from the sensor. The board also contains an analog to digital converter and microcontroller that

interfaces with the software. While on



Figure 11: Picture of final prototype

the development board, the software allows us to adjust the gain as well as record raw data into a text document that can be manipulated using Microsoft Excel.

Ergonomic Considerations

We made an effort to design the spirometer so that is usable by people with a wide range of abilities while still being practical. We incorporated as many principles of universal design as we could, including equivalent means of use for all users and accommodation of the user's preferences and abilities. Coaching software will be developed that will make spirometer use simple and intuitive, giving the user audio and visual feedback to make the measurement easier and more accurate. Some principles could not be taken into account without sacrificing accuracy of the spirometer. These principles include a tolerance for error and low physical effort by the user. However, the T-shaped spirometer that was selected should partially accommodate both of these principles. Because the T-shape would force the user upright, a more accurate measurement will be obtained, potentially allowing fewer repetitions because of discarded bad measurements. Fewer measurements would result in a low physical effort by the user. Additionally, safety, comfort, ease of use, productivity, and aesthetics were all considered in our design and are reflected in the design matrix.

Audio/Visual Progress

Although the focus of this semester was the spirometer itself, we also kept the final product in mind and devoted time to developing the audio/visual coaching tool. The first stage of this tool is a step-by-step instructional video that explains the Forced Vital Capacity procedure to the patient using the spirometer. The two-minute video highlights proper techniques for the procedure, as well as common improper practices (Figure 12).

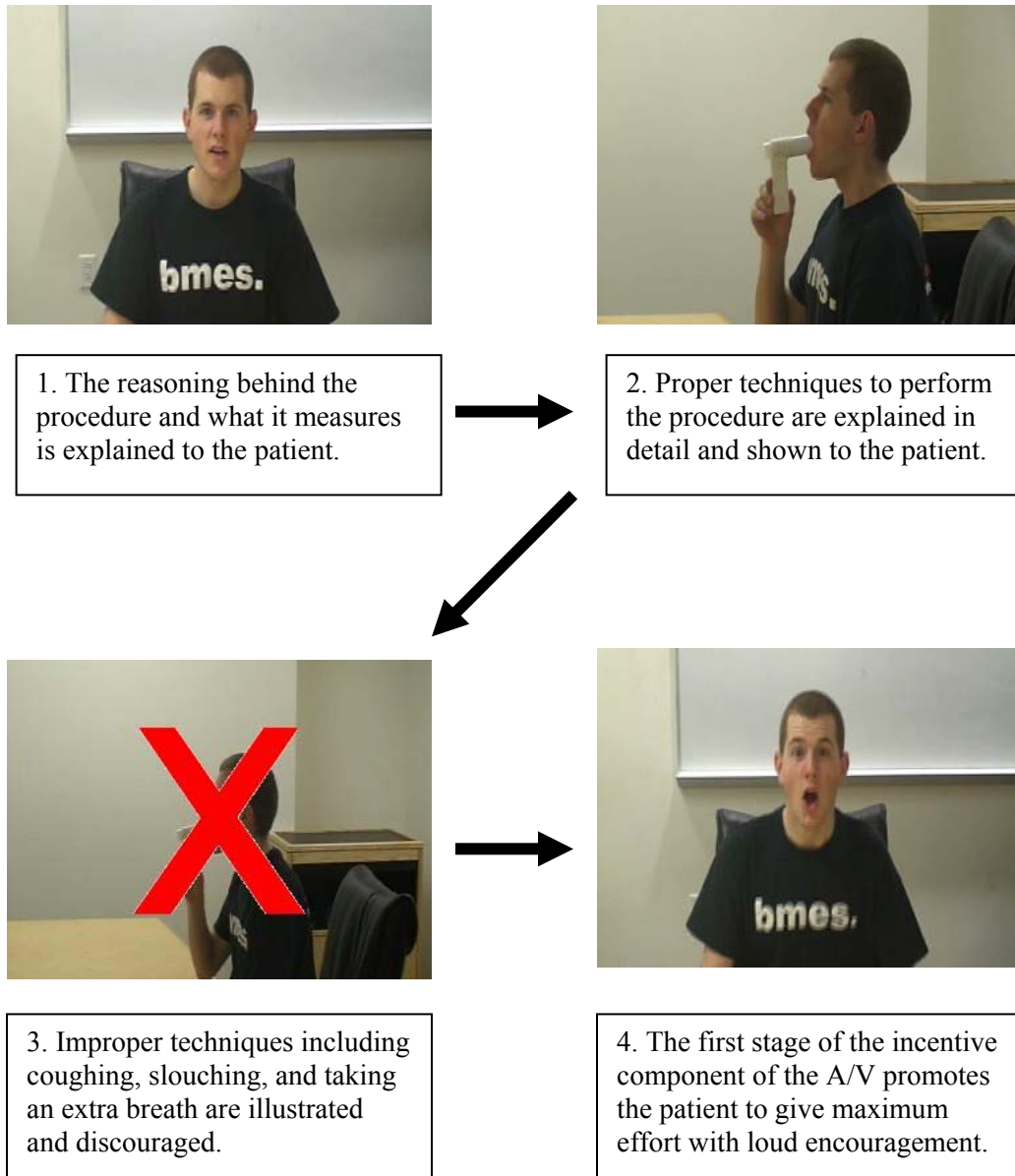


Figure 12 – Storyboard outlining the flow of the A/V coaching software.

Testing

Apparatus

Minimal air turbulence was required when testing our spirometer so that our sensor would record a consistent and uniform pressure. Thus, we built a plenum out of rigid PVC tubing with plastic straws glued to the inside (Figure 13 a). These straws would channel the air and create a laminar flow to test the prototype. A wooden dowel was used to obstruct air from flowing directly down the middle of the plenum. The obstruction also functioned to equalize the flow across the entire cross-section of the spirometer. The plenum was connected via plastic tubing to an air supply whose velocity could be controlled by turning a valve. A funnel was used as an interface from the small diameter tubing to the larger diameter plenum.

Before flowing through the plenum, air flowed through a section of PVC tubing with the same diameter as the plenum. This section of PVC was about 6 inches in length and significantly increased the uniformity of air flow across the opening of the plenum. Air velocity was measured upon exiting the spirometer in meters per second and converted into flow using the formula $F = 1000 * A v$ where F is flow in liters per second, A is cross-sectional area of the spirometer's inner diameter in square meters, v is velocity in meters per second, and 1000 is a scaling factor in liters per cubic meter. A photograph of the complete testing apparatus can be seen in Figure 13 b.

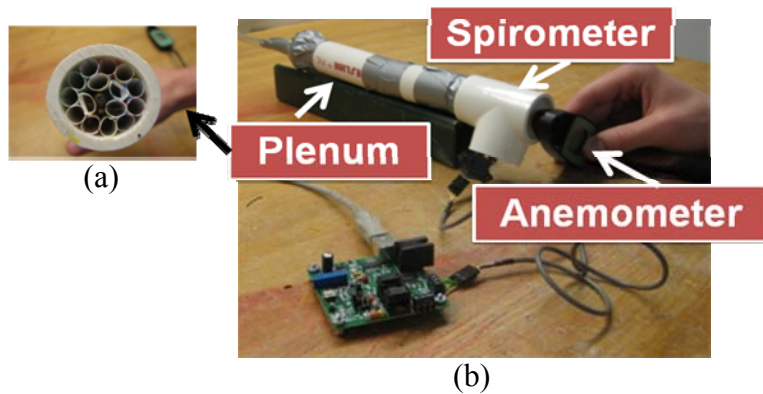


Figure 13: (a) Plenum that minimizes air flow turbulence. (b) Pressurized air which is connected in series with the plenum, the spirometer, and an anemometer to measure air velocity in m/s. While measuring air velocity using the anemometer, differential pressure across the sensor was recorded on a computer.

Connecting the parts in this order afforded the most uniformity in air velocity from the plenum, which we measured to be about a 30% difference between the highest and lowest velocities.

Any other setup resulted in much greater variation.

Procedure

An outline of our testing procedure can be seen in Figure 14.

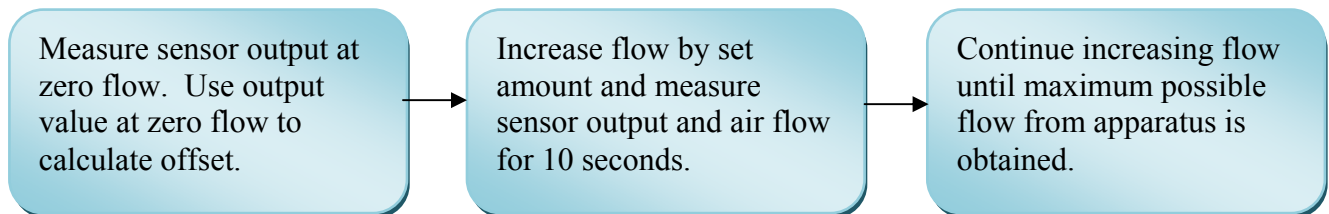


Figure 14: Flow diagram of basic testing procedure to correlate flow with sensor output

Starting at zero, our spirometer was subjected to a constant airflow for ten seconds while recording the output from the sensor with a 10 ms sample rate. The average sensor output and the standard deviation of the samples collected during the 10 second interval were calculated. These values, as well as the raw data, were recorded into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Flow was

increased at set intervals and measured using the anemometer, which was placed directly at the rear of the spirometer.

Initial prototype testing

The first spirometer we tested had a PVC body with a 1” inner diameter and thus a cross-sectional area of $5.07 \times 10^{-4} \text{ m}^2$. We added a small constriction of approximately one half inch in length with a diameter of $\frac{3}{4}$ ” to increase the pressure differential across the sensor. The constriction was also made of PVC.

Testing the first spirometer design, we obtained results summarized in Table 1:

Velocity (m/s)	Flow (L/s)	Average output (%)	Standard deviation (%)
0	0	49.6493	0.7557
5	2.53	49.764	0.5609
10	5.067	59.7294	0.6842

Table 1: Chip output for our first spirometer design at various flows. For flow calculation, the inner diameter was assumed to be 1.0 inches. Average output and standard deviation were over a period of 10 seconds.

For this design, standard deviation of the output was higher than the output change between flows. As a result of this testing, our spirometer design was modified to that shown in Figure 15. Our second spirometer prototype was made of nylon and features a significant constriction yielding a greater pressure drop across the sensor.

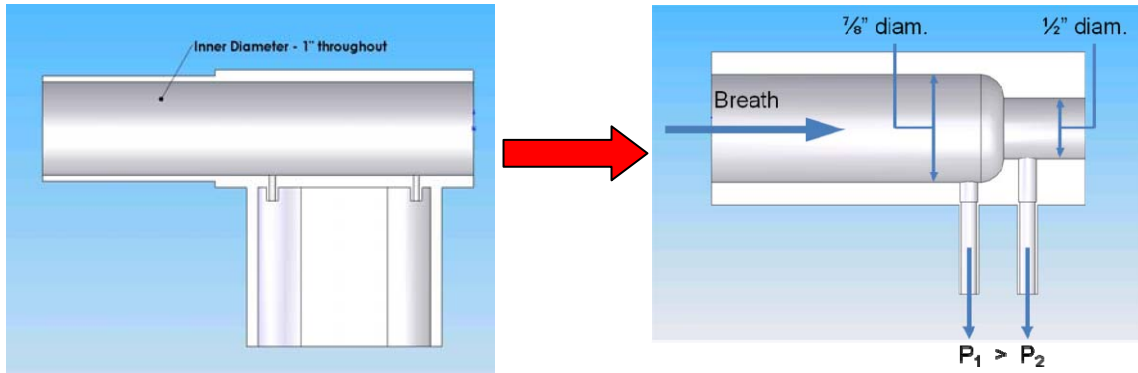


Figure 15: Cutaways of first and second spirometer designs. A design change increased the constriction to yield a higher signal.

Although the increased constriction yields a much stronger signal, its resistance is over that required by the American Thoracic Society. [4] In our future work, we will find the ideal design that allows a significant signal while meeting ATS standards. Additionally, the wires connecting the sensor to the signal conditioner were significantly reduced to minimize environmental noise. These modifications allowed our final prototype to achieve a much greater signal and lower noise.

Final prototype testing

With the final prototype, we tested different flows according to the procedure outlined in Figure 14, measuring air velocity before the spirometer and converting that into a flow. Results are summarized in Table 2:

Velocity (m/s)	Flow (L/s)	Output (%)	Standard deviation (%)
0	0	49.6667	0.006349505
2.5	0.96975	49.9096	0.01024422
5	1.9395	50.2598	0.025448136
7.5	2.90925	51.2647	0.058547076
10	3.879	52.4573	0.072268041
12.5	4.84875	53.89	0.143423034

Table 2: Initial testing of the second spirometer design. Standard deviation is over a period of 10 seconds with 10 ms between samples.

The data from testing nicely fit a quadratic curve, shown in Figure 16:

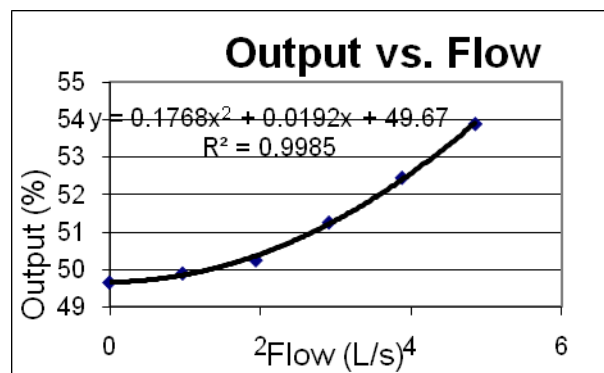


Figure 16: Chip output plotted against flow yields a quadratic curve

The quadratic nature of the curve was expected because pressure is proportional to flow squared in Bernoulli's equation. To solve for flow in terms of the output, we took the inverse of the equation predicted by Microsoft Excel:

$$F = \frac{-2b + \sqrt{y - c}}{\sqrt{a}}$$

where F is the flow in liters per second and y is the signal output. The constants a , b , and c in this equation were those generated from the trendline in Excel, and have values $a = 0.1768$, $b = 0.0192$, and $c = 49.67$.

Following flow testing, we then recorded the signal output generated from flowing an air volume of three liters from a standardized syringe. Using the above equation to obtain flow

from the output and integrating it over time to obtain volume (first order approximation), we calculated a volume of 1.65 L. After this test, we decided that measuring velocity before the spirometer was not accurate and from that point on, testing was conducted by measuring air velocity after the spirometer. Additional testing using this setup was performed, and results are summarized in Table 3 and Figure 17:

Velocity (m/s)	Flow (L/s)	Output (%)	Standard deviation (%)
0	0	49.71164	0.004464
1.4	0.177348	49.7227	0.006336
2.1	0.266021	49.73504	0.005062
6.1	0.772729	49.83558	0.044193
7	0.886738	49.85483	0.007115
8	1.013415	49.89882	0.006423
9.6	1.216098	49.98172	0.007245
11.1	1.406113	50.07837	0.011528
12.8	1.621464	50.20516	0.014765
15	1.900153	50.38193	0.017507

Table 3: Testing data with velocity measured after the spirometer body.

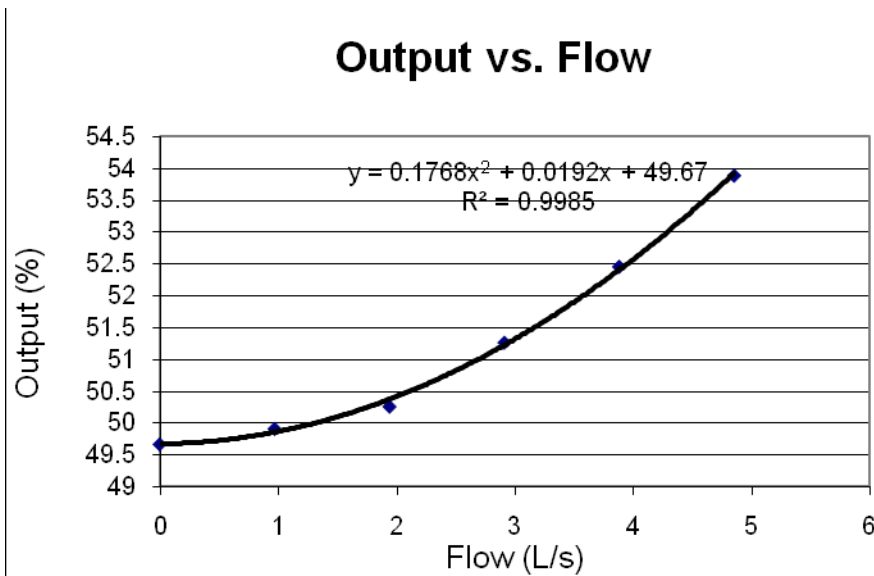


Figure 16: Flow vs. output data graphed when measuring velocity after the spirometer body. The data fit a quadratic curve.

This equation was again used to integrate flow from a 3 liter syringe input to yield volume. We calculated a volume of 1.9 liters when using the most recently provided equation from Excel.

However, for integration calculations, we ignored the b value, giving the new equation:

$$F = \sqrt{\frac{y-c}{a}}$$

For c, we substituted the value from beginning of the test (baseline value). Using this method, we were able to calculate a volume of 1.9 liters by first order numerical integration for a three liter syringe. We multiplied each flow by a constant equal to $3.0/1.9 = 1.58$, and this scaling enabled us to record volumes within 3% of 3L over three trials. Testing was halted after three trials due to time and equipment limitations.

Timeline of Future Work

To achieve the specifications described in Appendix A, we plan to do extensive testing and validation on accuracy and reliability, and we will develop audiovisual coaching to universalize how patients blow into the spirometer. We have divided testing and coaching development into several phases (Figure 18). By following this plan, we expect to develop a mass-producible, low-cost spirometer by May, 2010.

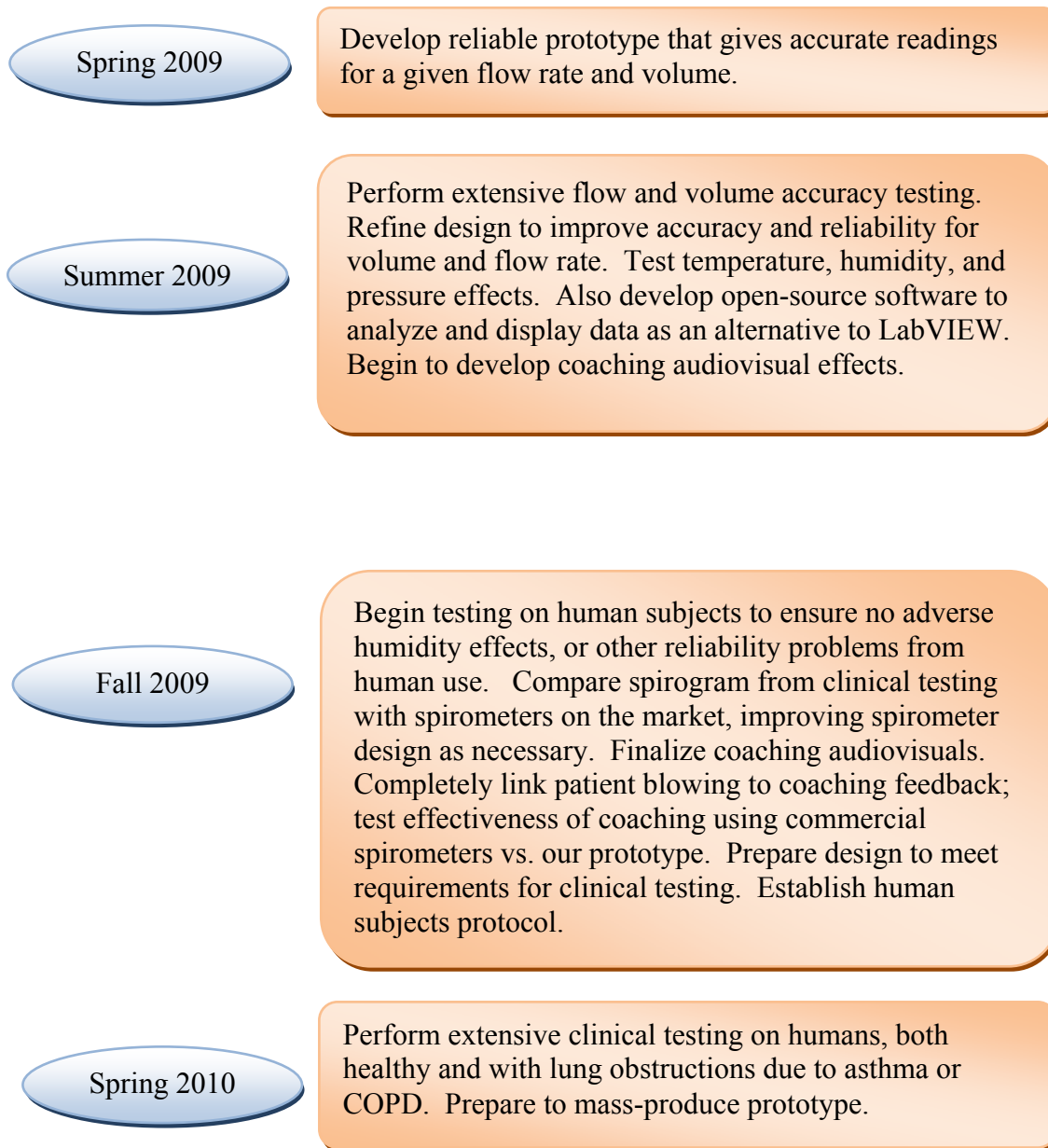


Figure 18: Proposed timeline for approaching spirometer design.

Throughout all of our design process, existing designs that are similar to ours will need to be researched to provide guidance but also to ensure we are not infringing on others' patented designs. Research into the most cost-effective production methods and materials will also be an ongoing process.

Summer 2009

This coming summer will be an excellent opportunity to develop and validate some of the operational characteristics of our spirometer. Specifically, we plan to refine both the hardware and the data analysis portion of the software to meet performance requirements.

I. Spirometer design

Even though scaling flows resulted in a correct three liter volume, flows may not be accurate because of air leakage from the testing apparatus at the site of measurement. We also need to measure volumes other than 3 L reliably. The 31014 signal conditioner chip provided by ZMD seems to be very low noise and it gives us good precision – we can repeat measurements with low standard deviation.

As mentioned before, the spirometer that we built does not meet ATS requirements for maximum resistance. The maximum resistance a spirometer should have is 150 Pa/L·s while the one we build was over 500 Pa/L·s. A wider diameter tube should be constructed, even though this may sacrifice signal amplitude. Dimensions could be decided after considering resistance values from various tube diameters and lengths summarized in Table 4:

Length (inches)	Diameter (inches)							
	0.5	0.625	0.75	0.875	1	1.125	1.25	
0.25	157.8	64.6	31.2	16.8	9.9	6.2	4.0	
0.5	315.7	129.3	62.4	33.7	19.7	12.3	8.1	
0.75	473.5	193.9	93.5	50.5	29.6	18.5	12.1	
1	631.3	258.6	124.7	67.3	39.5	24.6	16.2	
1.25	789.2	323.2	155.9	84.1	49.3	30.8	20.2	
1.5	947.0	387.9	187.1	101.0	59.2	37.0	24.2	
1.75	1104.8	452.5	218.2	117.8	69.1	43.1	28.3	
2	1262.7	517.2	249.4	134.6	78.9	49.3	32.3	
2.25	1420.5	581.8	280.6	151.5	88.8	55.4	36.4	
2.5	1578.3	646.5	311.8	168.3	98.6	61.6	40.4	
2.75	1736.2	711.1	342.9	185.1	108.5	67.7	44.4	
3	1894.0	775.8	374.1	201.9	118.4	73.9	48.5	
3.25	2051.8	840.4	405.3	218.8	128.2	80.1	52.5	
3.5	2209.7	905.1	436.5	235.6	138.1	86.2	56.6	
3.75	2367.5	969.7	467.7	252.4	148.0	92.4	60.6	
4	2525.3	1034.4	498.8	269.3	157.8	98.5	64.6	
4.25	2683.1	1099.0	530.0	286.1	167.7	104.7	68.7	
4.5	2841.0	1163.7	561.2	302.9	177.6	110.9	72.7	
4.75	2998.8	1228.3	592.4	319.7	187.4	117.0	76.8	
5	3156.6	1293.0	623.5	336.6	197.3	123.2	80.8	

Table 4: Resistance values in Pa/L·s according to the spirometer length and diameter. Resistances add linearly. Values highlighted in red are dimensions that were used in the construction of our second spirometer. Values highlighted in blue could potentially be used when constructing future spirometers. Total resistance of the spirometer should be under 150 Pa/L·s.

Resistance values were calculated using the formula: $R = \frac{8\mu L}{\pi r^4}$

where R is resistance, μ is dynamic viscosity estimated to be 1.587×10^{-5} kg/m·s because it is between that of steam and air, L is length, π is approximately 3.14159, r is radius.

For the construction of future spirometers, we could construct a spirometer of similar length as our second prototype, but with wider internal diameters. Although signal strength would be compromised slightly, the robustness of the signal conditioner chip should still allow

for a low-noise, meaningful signal. Further testing during the summer will be performed and our prototype will be modified following these guidelines.

II. Software Design

In addition to the spirometry hardware, we also plan on developing our spirometer software during the summer. The first aspect of the software involves the A/V coaching material. To ensure a quality coaching software, additional research into effective motivation techniques during spirometry will be required to maximize the function our design. This research will include scholarly literature published about motivational techniques that can be utilized with our coaching software.

Beyond the motivational program, we plan to develop open-source software that will record patient data and graph test results on a computer monitor in real-time. Specifically, the software will eventually be able to present the airflow data in both flow-volume and volume-time charts. Furthermore, the software should also calculate and display the peak expiratory flow rate (PEF), the total volume of air (FVC), and the volume of air that flowed through the spirometer within the first second of the test (FEV1). We will move basic graphical display capabilities present after this semester from being dependent on the ZMD development software to an open-source platform.

Capstone courses

In Fall 2009, we would make design refinements and implement coaching software that would allow clinical testing in Spring 2010. Initial testing using a small sample (5-10) of individuals would ensure that human use has no effect on the calibration of the spirometer. Subsequent testing will validate the accuracy of our prototype against American Thoracic

Society standards and commercial spirometers. If the spirometer does not comply with ATS standards, the design can be refined and re-tested.

We also plan to improve and refine the audiovisuals developed during the summer. During the tests, the software should provide motivation to perform the tests at maximal effort. To accomplish this, we plan on making the software interactive, possibly incorporating a competitive element, so that subjects are motivated by real-time visual indications of their test performance. The quality of coaching provided by different technicians can lead to significantly different results. These variances have the potential to be even more significant if the patient is monitored at various facilities. Thus, development of standardized and effective coaching software is essential for our product.

Finally, during Fall 2009, we plan to complete preparations needed for clinical testing. We will work with our client, local respiratory physicians, and pulmonary function clinic technicians to develop a Human Subjects Protocol and will submit our test procedures for review and approval by the UWSMPH Health Sciences IRB.

In Spring 2010, we will perform clinical testing in the Dean Health East Clinic Pulmonary Function Testing (PFT) Lab and the Children's Hospital in Milwaukee, as well as in the UW PFT Lab. We will evaluate agreement between measurements performed by our spirometer with measurements by individuals tested using commercial spirometers in pulmonary function clinics. We will include healthy people and people with diagnosed chronic respiratory disease. Testing our spirometer on individuals with known pulmonary diseases is essential because it will indicate whether our spirometer is capable of detecting lung abnormalities.

Conclusion/Benefits

Due to its prohibitive cost, adequate pulmonary function testing in developing nations such as India is very limited. Physicians from these areas realize that the quality of treatment they could provide to patients would increase dramatically if they had access to spirometers. Unfortunately, such physicians cannot afford to invest in these devices as the high costs would likely never be regained from the nominal fees they charge for their services. Thus, essential diagnoses and monitoring are performed with severely limited information.

The progress we have made this semester in the development of a low-cost spirometer is the first step toward changing this situation. This project exhibits a profitable yet socially-beneficial solution in manufacturing and selling a low-cost spirometer to practitioners in developing countries. This project also demonstrates the value of open innovation in the medical device and healthcare sector, and the commercial viability of addressing situations where the market has failed to deliver necessary technology at a widely affordable price. As this project moves forward, we are eager to advance our design and begin human trials.

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APPENDIX A - Product Design Specifications

Low-cost, Open-source Spirometer

Andrew Bremer, Andrew Dias, Jeremy Glynn, Jeremy Schaefer

Client: David Van Sickle, PhD

Advisor: Professor Mitch Tyler

Last Updated: 3/9/09

Background and Problem Statement: Spirometers are used to diagnose many pulmonary diseases including chronic respiratory diseases that affect approximately 300 million people. Many of these people do not have access to a spirometer because current models are expensive and operation requires a trained technician to administer the procedure. The purpose of this project is to develop a low-cost spirometer usable without the aid of a trained technician. The project includes the physical design of the spirometer, software development to display and analyze results, and designing a universal tool to provide audiovisual coaching on the tests.

Client requirements

- Interface spirometer with a computer via USB cable
- Affordable for use in emerging countries
- Handheld and durable
- Standardized audio/visual respiration coaching for patient
- Easy to maintain sterility
- Minimize calibration
- Simple and universal instructions for operation
- Graphically display results of FVC maneuver, including FEV1 measurements
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of the maneuver
- Provide feedback to the subject about their performance after each test
- Carry out some rudimentary analysis and interpretation of results

Design requirements:

1. Physical and Operational Characteristics

- a. *Performance requirements:* Capable of continually measuring air flows between 0 and 14 L/sec for at least 15 seconds and recording air volumes of at least 8 L. With a flow of 14 L/s, the total resistance of the spirometer should be less than 0.15 kPa/L·sec. Should display plots of flow vs. volume and volume vs. time on the laptop screen preferably in real time, as well as display data numerically. Device will need to withstand these pressures and air flows multiple times daily and still be able to function accurately. Software should be open source and capable of running on Linux-based platforms. The patient's name, age, gender, smoking status, height and weight must be stored by the computer. In addition, environmental data such as temperature, humidity, date, testing site and other information found in Table 8 of the American Thoracic Society (ATS) standards for accuracy and repeatability as per *ATS/ERS Standardisation of Spirometry*, 2005 update. Data from the measurements should be recorded in the standard format described in the standards for accuracy and

repeatability section of *Standardisation of Spirometry*, 2005 update. If data is input in a measure other than the spirometry standard, the computer should convert the data to the appropriate units. The computer should monitor and evaluate the quality of the maneuver and instruct the patient when changes in the maneuver are necessary. Rudimentary analysis and interpretation should also be performed.

- b. *Safety*: The spirometer should not pose a choking hazard and should contain no components that could physically injure the user. Standardized and automated audiovisual instruction and coaching- in appropriate language and at appropriate literacy level - should ensure that the patient is able to safely perform the test, and if so, safely guide and assist the patient and provider through the test with a maximum of eight repetitions as per *ATS/ERS Standardisation of Spirometry*, 2005 update. The spirometer should use an affordable disposable mouthpiece with a minimal lifespan (to minimize the likelihood of reuse) so that communicable diseases are not spread between users.
 - c. *Accuracy and Reliability*: Patient data obtained independently should meet ATS standards for accuracy and repeatability as per *ATS/ERS Standardisation of Spirometry*, 2005 update. Accuracy and reliability should be maintained with only initial factory-set calibration in varied temperature and humidity conditions. Standardized respiration coaching should ensure repeatable pulmonary measurements. Mouthpiece should be designed such that there is no variability in their attachment to the spirometer, which potentially yields inconsistencies in the length of the spirometer.
 - d. *Life in Service*: The unit will be used multiple times per day for a period of 10 years. Also, software should be capable of being easily updated to fix bugs and provide additional features.
 - e. *Shelf Life*: Unit should be able to withstand various modes of international transportation
 - f. *Operating Environment*: The unit should maintain accurate function in varying climates and high humidity from exhalation. Exhaled air is assumed to be at body temperature (37°C) and saturated with water vapor (100% humidity). The unit may be operated by a patient without technical training or supervision.
 - g. *Ergonomics*: The spirometer should be comfortable to use with either hand while sitting or standing. The mouthpiece should be comfortable to use for the duration of a full set of tests, at least 10 minutes. Audiovisual coaching tool should accommodate a range of languages and literacy.
 - h. *Size*: The unit is handheld and easily portable, measuring 10.2 cm (4 in) in length and 3.2 cm (1.25 in) in diameter.
 - i. *Weight*: The maximum weight for the unit is 500 grams (1.1 lb)
 - j. *Materials*: The chosen material for initial prototype is nylon with PVC handle. The chosen materials are abuse-tolerant, easily manufactured on a mass scale, and water and heat resistant to deformity or breaking.
 - k. *Aesthetics, Appearance, and Finish*: The material should look sleek yet not slip when held in the hands. The user interface should be professional and intuitive. There should be an option for entering information in metric or English units.
2. Production Characteristics
 - a. *Quantity*: One prototype whose design can be mass-produced and a version of software required to run the spirometer and display and interpret test results.
 - b. *Target Product Cost*: Less than \$50, preferably around \$20

3. Miscellaneous

- a. *Standards and Specifications*: Unit should meet international standards for safety, specifically those of the World Health Organization (WHO) as per *Medical Device Regulations: Global overview and guiding principles* and should be compatible with a personal computer. Also, all operation information, such as that printed in manuals, the coaching software, and on the spirometer itself, must be conveyed in a universal fashion for multi-lingual understanding.
- b. *Customer*: Emerging nation healthcare practitioner
- c. *Patient-related concerns*: Device mouthpiece should be replaced between uses
- d. *Competition*: Most devices on the market are expensive:
 - SDI Diagnostics Spriolab II: \$2395
 - SDI Diagnostics Astra 300 Touchscreen Spirometer: \$1429
 - Microdirect spiro^v Spirometer: \$195
 - MicroDirect Micro Spirometer: \$351.55
 - MicroDirect SpiroUSB (with Spida5 software): \$1419.55
 - The lowest cost spirometer was developed at the Indian Institute of Technology - Bombay and costs around \$80.